

National Medical Laboratory Professionals Week

Laboratory Professionals: Delivering Today's Results for a Healthier Tomorrow is this year's theme for National Medical Laboratory Professionals Week (NMLPW). Next week a nation-wide celebration will recognize those who work in clinical laboratories and the valuable role they play as important members of the health care team. In this 33rd year of NMLPW it is important to remember the essential work performed by laboratory professionals that often goes unnoticed by the general public.

To learn more about NMLPW go to: <http://www.ascls.org/conferences/2008NMLW/index.asp>

CLIA

The Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments (CLIA) of 1988 are regulations that must be followed by all laboratories certified by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). The objective of the CLIA program is to ensure quality laboratory testing. CLIA regulates 189,000 U.S. laboratories that perform testing on human specimens. Research laboratories that do not report patient test results are exempt from CLIA.

All laboratories engaged in human testing are required to apply for a CLIA certificate. Certificates are issued based on test complexity. The MDPH BLS is accredited to perform high complexity testing. High complexity laboratories are required to conform to personnel requirements, have a quality management plan and participate in proficiency testing programs based on testing performed in the laboratory. The BLS participates in many proficiency test programs and is routinely evaluated by CMS laboratory inspectors to maintain accreditation.

For more CLIA info, go to:
www.cms.hhs.gov/clia

Why should public health laboratories celebrate National Medical Laboratory Professionals Week? It is true that the primary focus of laboratory testing at the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) Bureau of Laboratory Sciences (BLS) is not to diagnose disease and monitor individual therapy. The scope of testing at the BLS is far more expansive than what is found in the clinical setting and also includes testing of environmental and animal specimens. What is the connection? For many specimens it all starts on the fourth floor. The reference bacteriology laboratory staffed by Peter Belanger, Cyndi Condon, Karyn Conley, Taryn Crotty, Charleen Thaice, and Ellen Silva receive bacterial isolates from clinical laboratories throughout the state. Last year they identified or confirmed identification of over 5,000 specimens. In addition to the identification of unusual isolates they performed surveillance testing on strains causing serious systemic infection and processed clinical specimens for the diagnosis of legionellosis. Other laboratorians within the Division of Microbiology including Foodborne Disease Surveillance, HIV and Hepatitis, Mycobacteriology



The STD Laboratory: Tim Draper, Holly Glover, Maureen Ahern, Rozelta Boyd, Rita Padilla, Tak-wah Chin & Jaime



The Reference Bacteriology Laboratory: Charleen Thaice, Peter Belanger, Ellen Silva, Taryn Crotty, Caryn Conley & Cyndi Condon

and Sexually Transmitted Diseases test thousands of patient specimens each year. Chemists on the third floor test human specimens for evidence of toxic levels of contaminants such as lead and mercury. On the seventh and eighth floors viral cultures, serology and molecular methods are used to identify influenza virus and strains of West Nile virus and eastern equine encephalitis virus isolated from humans. So, while the BLS is not a conventional clinical laboratory, we celebrate the laboratory staff because in protecting the health of the citizens of the Commonwealth they do indeed Deliver Today's Results for a Healthier Tomorrow.



Peggy DiNatale, Quality Assurance Supervisor, has worked for almost 15 years at the MDPH Bureau of Laboratory Sciences. Peggy also has considerable quality management experience in hospital and other laboratories. Her expertise with CLIA and other regulations that impact BLS laboratory practice is invaluable. She is a certified Medical Technologist with a MS in Medical Laboratory Science from Northeastern University.